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ABSTRACT

Distributed by the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Education, and Health and Human Services, this pamphlet provides parents with information and advice about their infants in the eighth month of life. Following a brief description of developmental characteristics at this age, the pamphlet offers advice on a variety of topics, including: ways to keep baby safe, early intervention and baby's developing skills, reading to baby, teen parents, baby's brain, playing with an eight-month old, floor time, and questions parents ask. The pamphlet concludes with a list of relevant information resources for families. (HTH)

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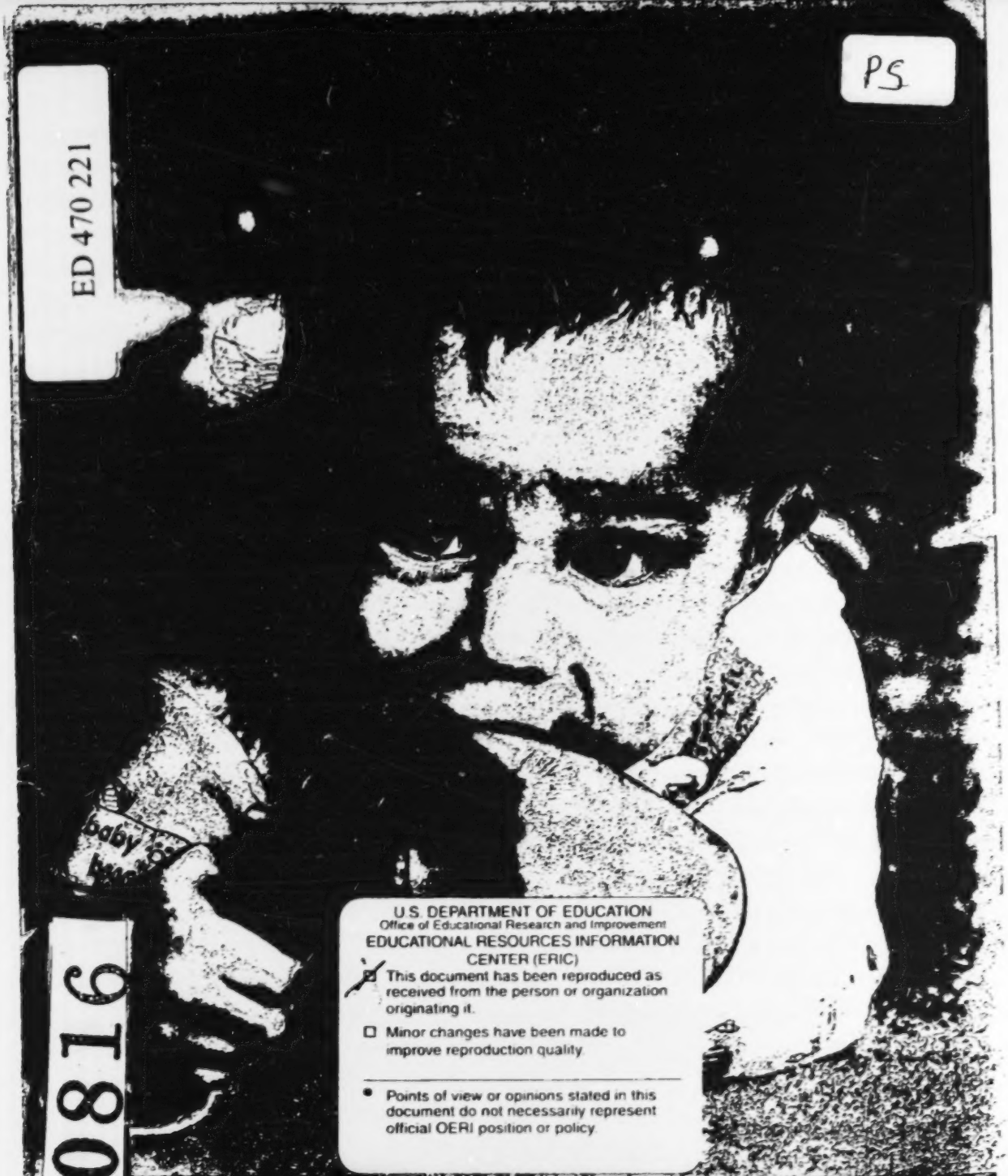

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Healthy Start, Grow Smart

Your Eight-Month-Old

PS 030816

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Healthy Start, Grow Smart

Your Eight-Month-Old

Prepared by:

U.S. Department of Agriculture

U.S. Department of Education

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

2002

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Your Eight-Month-Old

At eight months, your baby is curious about everything. This is a fun time for both of you. Your baby may surprise you with how well she can get around the house. Let her explore, but keep her safe.

Now that she can pull herself around on her belly or crawl, she wants to get into everything. When she holds things in her hand, she wants to throw them or put them in her mouth. Or she wants to bang them on the table. These activities are important ways she learns. It seems like the more noise she can make, the more she likes it.

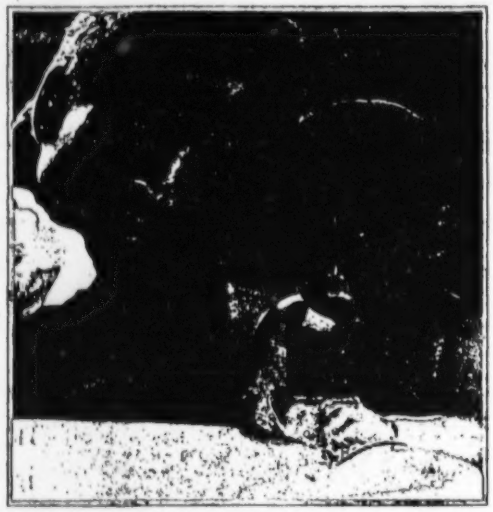
She practices new skills every day. She may try to pull herself up to a standing position. She likes finger foods.

Your baby may try to make new sounds, like "dada." The world is exciting to her, but some things may scare her. When she is around strangers, she may cry and hide her face. She may cling to you. All these things are normal. They are part of learning and growing.

She may try to stand or crawl. She may fall down a lot. It may be hard for you to watch her fall. Try to let her explore and move around on her own unless she is in danger or may hurt herself. Make your home as safe as possible for your baby. Join in the games that help her learn about her world.

Ways To Keep Your Baby Safe

Your baby needs to be safe. But she also needs to explore. You must decide when to tell her "no." And you must decide when to let her discover things on her own. You can keep your eight-month-old baby safe. But you always have to stay one step ahead of her!



Baby-proof your house:

- ☆ Lock up all of your medicines, vitamins and pills.
- ★ Be careful when visitors come—people often carry medications in their purses or handbags.
- ★ Remove sharp things from your baby's reach.
- ★ Put covers on all electrical outlets.

  Move all electrical cords and extension cords out of your baby's reach.
- ★ Keep your baby away from fans and space heaters.
- ★ Put away small things that your baby can swallow.
- ☆ Keep cleaners and detergents out of your baby's reach.
- ★ Put latches on dresser drawers and cupboards.
- ★ Place tight covers on trash cans and diaper pails.
- ★ Keep your toilet lid down. Your baby can fall into the toilet and drown.
- ★ Be sure to cushion the sharp corners and edges of furniture where your baby plays.
- ★ Avoid using any toy chest or other container with a hinged lid that can fall freely and smash small fingers and heads. To learn more about toy chest safety, call the Consumer Product Safety Commission at 1-800-638-2772, or visit their Web site at www.cpsc.gov/.

Prevent falls:

- ★ Do not leave your baby alone on a bed, changing table or chair.
- ★ Do not put furniture on bare floors. Put it on top of rugs or small rubber squares that you can get from the hardware store to hold it in place so it does not slide away from your baby trying to stand up.
- ★ Install safety gates at the top and bottom of stairs. This includes porch stairs.

Prevent drowning:

- ☆ Never leave your baby alone in the bathtub.
- ★ Never leave her alone near a swimming pool or any amount of water including a pail of water. It doesn't take a lot of water to drown a baby.

Closely watching your baby is the best way to keep her safe. Check on her frequently. If you leave the room for a short time, make sure she is in a safe place, such as a crib or a playpen. And be sure to keep a list of emergency phone numbers right next to your telephone.

Early Intervention and Your Baby's Developing Skills

Children learn skills as they grow. These skills happen by certain ages. A child learns skills at her own pace. You can see how your baby is doing. Watch when she starts to crawl, walk, talk and feed herself.

If you are concerned that your baby is learning skills too slowly, talk to your doctor. You can also call 1-800-695-0285 to get information. The call is free. When you call, you will be told how to contact the early intervention program in your state. Staff of your state's early intervention program can assist you in finding help in your state.

What is an early intervention program?

An early intervention program helps children from birth to age three. Early intervention staff can help your baby learn to roll over, sit up, crawl and grasp toys.

They also help children who are having problems seeing, hearing and talking.

How does an early intervention program help?

It can help your child with needed services and also help you join a support group.

Your family and early intervention staff can work together to plan services. These services teach basic skills and can be done in your home or during child care.

Your Baby's Next Checkup

Now is the time to make an appointment for your baby's nine-month checkup. At this checkup, the doctor will measure your baby's head. The doctor will weigh your baby and measure her length. The doctor will give your baby a physical exam. You will need to remove your baby's clothes before the doctor can do this. You will need to bring an extra diaper, too.

The doctor will also check to see how your baby is developing. Here are some of the things the doctor will check:

- ★ How well she can sit by herself.
- ★ How well she reaches for objects.
- ★ How well her eyes are able to follow moving objects.
- ★ The sounds she makes.

If she did not have a blood test at her six-month visit, your baby may have a test for anemia. She may also be tested for tuberculosis (TB). If you think of questions you would like to ask the doctor, write them down. You might want to bring your questions with you to the checkup. That way, you won't forget what you wanted to ask. If the doctor's answers are not clear to you, say so. It is important that you understand what is best for your baby.

Mealtime with Your Eight-Month-Old

Mealtimes are still messy for you and your eight-month-old. She continues to need your special attention at meal times.

Your baby is probably able to pick up food with her fingers. By now, she is learning to drink from a cup. When she chews, she can move the food to the sides of her mouth.

You can now offer her thicker and lumpier foods. Here are some foods that she should be able to eat now:

- ★ Soft, small pieces of meat.
- ★ Mashed beans or peas.
- ★ Bite-size pieces of bread.
- ☆ Cooked, mashed fruits and vegetables.
- ★ Noodles.

Your baby is not yet ready for some foods. Here are some foods that you should not give her yet:

- ★ Cow's milk.
- ★ Egg whites.
- ☆ More than 4 ounces of juice per day.
- ★ Honey or Karo syrup.
- ★ Wheat cereal.

Instead of drinking cow's milk, your baby should continue to be breastfed or to get formula with iron. Egg whites and milk can make a young baby sick. If your baby drinks too much juice, she may lose her appetite. Then she might not eat the foods she needs. Honey may have bacteria. This can make your baby very sick. Wheat cereal can be hard for your baby to digest.

Remember, your baby knows how much food to eat. Give her a choice of foods that will help her grow. Do not force your baby to eat her food. She knows how much food she needs.

Meals should be offered at regular times each day. Meal times should be pleasant and as quiet as possible. Turn the TV off. Don't have a lot of other activity going on. Enjoy your meals together.

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Reading to Your Baby

Reading to your baby is a way to spend special time with her. And it is one of the best ways to help your baby learn. Read to her every day.

When you read to your baby, you are helping her learn new words. Reading to her lets her know that books and reading are important. Reading to her now will help her do well in school later on.

At this age, your baby can pay attention for only a short time. Read only a few pages to her with lots of large, colorful pictures. She loves to have you read the same book over and over. Hearing the words over and over helps her to become familiar with them. She will begin to point to pictures to get you to name them for her.

Your baby likes to touch things. You can make a book for her with different pictures of her favorite things. Cover the book in plastic. She will like to feel it. You can paste pictures onto sheets of paper in the book. Use pictures of toys, family members or friends, foods, flowers or other things she likes. It will make her happy to look at these pictures and to feel the pages. She will like to listen to you as you talk to her about them.

You can even make a book of textures. Paste pieces of fabric onto the pages. You can use fabrics that are rough, bumpy and scratchy. You can add fluffy, stretchy and other kinds of fabrics. You can even paste in a piece of leather or some soft fur. This can be her special book. She will enjoy handling its pages. The important thing is to spend time reading to her every day. Reading to her is good for both of you.

Do you want to learn to read better? A public library might be able to help. You can also call America's Literacy Directory at 1-800-288-8813 to find out about programs in your area that help people learn to read. The call is free.

Teen Parents

If you are a teenage parent, you may need help from your family to care for your baby.

- ★ Communicate with your parents. Let them know how you feel about being a new mother. Try to talk with them about your feelings. Do this in a calm way.
- ★ Listen to your parents. Try to understand their feelings. Show them by your actions that you are a responsible person.
- ★ When your parents help you, show them that you are grateful. Your baby needs the support of her whole family.
- ★ If you need someone else to talk to, you might ask the counselor at your school.

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What's It Like To Be Eight Months Old?

How I move:

- ☆ I crawl backward and forward on my stomach.
- ★ I may pull myself up. First, I have to hold on to something. Maybe I'll hold on to a piece of furniture. Getting back down is not so easy!
- ★ I can stand up. But I have to lean against something.
- ★ I can reach for objects and pick them up with my fingers. Make sure I don't swallow them! I could choke.
- ★ I can hold on to a toy for several minutes.

How I talk:

- ★ I recognize some words. When I hear them, I turn and listen.
- ★ I may make some double sounds. I may say sounds such as "da-da," "ma-ma" and "bye-bye."

How I think and understand:

- ☆ I want to learn. I want to explore.
- ★ I remember some things.
- ★ I have feelings.
- ★ New experiences may scare me. New people may scare me.
- ★ I might get upset if you leave the room, even for a short time.
- ☆ When you come back, I feel happy.
- ★ I may get upset sometimes when I cannot reach something.

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Playing with Your Eight-Month-Old

Your baby is busy learning new things. She is learning that she can cause things to happen. Every day, she is learning to explore. You can help your baby make things happen.

- ★ Give her a ball. When she drops it, she'll see it bounce or roll across the floor. Pick the ball up and give it back to her. Talk to her about what it is called and how it "rolls" and "bounces."
- ★ Let her play with a toy called a "busy box." Some people call it an "activity board." She can push a button to make a bell ring, or pull a cord to make an animal sound.
- ★ Give her pots and pans, measuring cups or spoons. She'll find out that she can bang them together and make lots of noise. In the kitchen, keep one cupboard near the floor as the baby's cupboard. Put in old pots and pans and some toys so that she can play in the kitchen safely when you are working there to prepare meals.
- ★ Hold your baby and let her switch the room's light on and off. She'll enjoy making the room bright or dark. Say the word "light" when she turns it on and "all gone" when she turns it off.

You can also do things to help your baby explore.

- ☆ Give safe toys to your eight-month-old. Safe toys include balls, blocks and nesting toys such as measuring cups, busy boxes, rattles and stuffed animals.
- ★ Let her watch you hide objects under a towel or blanket on the floor. Help her find them. Ask her "where is it?" Praise her when she finds them.
- ★ Give her a box of large items that she can take out and put back in.

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Your Baby's Brain

Helping your baby's brain develop can be fun for both of you. There are things you can do to help her learn. Here are some ways to have fun and to help your baby's brain develop:

- ★ Talking to your baby helps her learn to speak. You can tell her the names of her body parts. You should repeat things. She will learn new words even before she can speak. A good time for this is bath time. You can talk about washing her leg, her foot and her toes.
- ★ Point to objects that are near and describe them for her. You can point to her rubber ducky and say, "See the yellow ducky." You can point to her blanket and say, "Grandma loves you. She made this special blanket just for you."
- ★ Talk about your activities as you do them. As you prepare to go outside, you can say, "Let's go get in the car. We'll go to the store for more diapers." If you're wiping her face, you can say, "Let's wipe your face clean. No more stickiness! Doesn't that feel better?"

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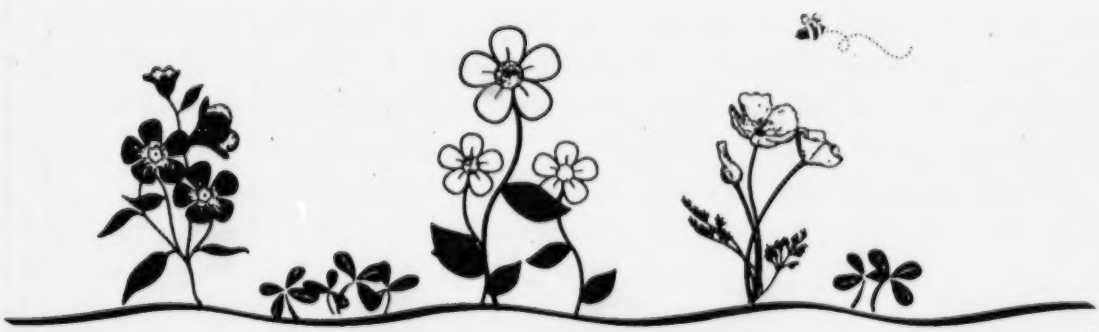
- ★ Play finger games or hand games with her. When your baby does something you like, move your fingers or hands. You can wiggle your fingers whenever she smiles. Or you can rub her tummy whenever she grabs her feet. Soon she will learn that when she does something it makes you do something too.
- ☆ Hide objects under a blanket. Act surprised and delighted when your baby finds them.
- ★ Put pillows or soft blocks down on the floor. Your baby can crawl to them. She can crawl all over them.
- ★ Give her toys and games that help her learn. Give her balls, blocks, nesting toys, busy boxes and rattles. She also likes toys that she can pull apart and put back together. Talk to her about the names of the toy and what the toy is doing.

See how much fun it is to help your baby's brain develop. This is a good time to enjoy each other. And remember, each child develops in her own special way.



Floor Time

Your baby is starting to move around more and explore her world. You can help her practice to crawl and creep and scoot. She's on the move! First, make her floor space safe and fun.

★ Find a quilt or blanket with colorful patterns to put under her.

★ Place interesting objects on the floor so she can crawl to them. You can use soft pillows, stuffed animals or soft blocks.

★ Let her crawl on things with different textures. This can be a big beach towel, a smooth sheet or a fuzzy blanket. You can play all sorts of fun games on the floor with your baby. Here are some ideas:

- Your baby will love to roll a ball back and forth with you. Use a soft fabric ball that has a bell inside. When you roll it, it will make a noise.
- Take turns playing a crawling game. Say, "I'm going to catch you!" and crawl after her. Then say, "You catch me!" and crawl away slowly enough for her to catch you.
- Put a towel on the floor next to your baby. Put a toy on it that's out of her reach. Show her how to drag the towel to her to bring the toy closer. Say to her "get it, get the toy."
- Make a stack of soft blocks. See how high you can make it before your baby knocks them all down. She loves to make that happen. Laugh with her when she does it.

Special Time with Your Eight-Month-Old

It is important to spend fun time with your baby every day. Your baby looks forward to having this time with you. She needs to be loved, cuddled, talked to and played with. If she spends the day with a sitter or in day care, this time alone with you is even more important. You can use this time to play games with her. Here are some games to play:

- ☆ You can help her crawl by placing pillows around the floor and showing her how to move around them.
- ★ You can sit with her while she takes toys out of a box and then puts them back in. Name each toy as she puts them in and takes them out.
- ★ You can show her pictures of animals and make animal sounds for her.
- ★ Hold your baby in front of a mirror or a window. Let her enjoy what she sees.
- ★ Sit with her in a rocking chair. Tell her you love her. Read her a story.
- ★ Talk or sing to her.

The important thing is to spend time with your baby. Even chores like bathing and feeding your baby can be turned into fun and learning games. She looks forward to being with you each day. She loves your touch and attention.

Take Good Care of Yourself

Being a parent is important. But you are more than a mother or a father. You must take good care of yourself. That way, you'll be able to take good care of your baby. What should you do to take care of yourself? Well, think about how you take care of your baby.

- ☆ You want your baby to be healthy. Keep yourself healthy, too. Eat healthy foods. Take walks. Exercise. Get enough rest. Get regular medical and dental checkups.
- ★ You want your baby to learn. Keep your mind active. Read a magazine or a book. Learn new things. Try making a new recipe.
- ★ You want your baby to learn how to talk. You need to talk to others, too. You need to talk to other adults. Take time to talk and listen to your spouse, family and friends.
- ★ You want your baby to be safe. You need to practice safety, too. Always wear your seat belt when driving. Always wear a bicycle helmet when riding. They will protect you. Later, your baby will learn to wear them, too. You need to practice safety to set an example for your baby.
- ★ You want your baby to enjoy life. You should, too. Listen to music. Do something creative. Do something fun. Stress may be a part of your life. Taking time for yourself will help you handle the stress better.

Questions Parents Ask

Question

My eight-month-old baby has now become scared around people. She sometimes cries even when my mother comes to visit. Why does she act this way? What can I do to help her?

Answer

Your baby will make friends when she is ready. She may just look at the new person. Or she may hand something to them and then take it back. Maybe she will pick up things in the room and put them on the person's lap. Do not make her kiss or hug the new person. This may make her unhappy. Your baby will become more at ease with people as she gets older. Then she will learn to make friends without crying and hiding.

At this age, your baby may be scared of anyone she doesn't see often. This may include her grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and family friends. This is a normal emotional reaction for your baby. She will react by hiding her face in your neck. She may cry. The best way to help her is to comfort her. Give her time to watch new people and get used to them. Let her decide when she wants to be held or touched by new people in her life.

Information Resources for Families

Families who are enrolled in the WIC program (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children) can get information on breastfeeding, formula feeding and nutrition at their local WIC office. Families eligible for WIC receive nutrition counseling and supplemental foods such as baby formula, milk and cereal. To find the WIC office nearest you, call your state health department or visit the WIC Web site at www.fns.usda.gov/wic/.

For information about early childhood education initiatives, you may contact the U.S. Department of Education at 1-800-USA-LEARN or visit their Web site at www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/teachingouryoungest/.

To learn about child care options, you may contact the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Child Care Aware by phone at 1-800-424-2246 or visit their Web site at www.childcareaware.org/.

For more information and resources on postpartum depression, breastfeeding, and many other women's health issues call The National Women's Health Information Center (NWHIC) at 1-800-994-9662 (1-800-994-WOMAN). You can visit their Web site at www.4woman.gov/.

To learn more about breastfeeding, you may call La Leche League at 1-800-LALECHE or visit their Web site at www.lalecheleague.org/.

To learn more about free or low-cost health insurance for children, you can call the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Insure Kids Now Program at 1-877-KIDSNOW. You can also visit their Web site at www.insurekidsnow.gov/.

The American Association of Poison Control Centers (AAPCC) poison control hotline, 1-800-222-1222, should be on your list of emergency numbers. To learn more, you can visit the AAPCC Web site at www.aapcc.org/.

Families who cannot afford a car safety seat can contact the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. They can provide information on resources that help low-income families purchase or borrow child car seats. You may call them at 1-800-424-9393 or visit their Web site at www.nhtsa.dot.gov/.

To learn more about safety, you can call the Consumer Product Safety Commission at 1-800-638-2772 or visit their Web site at www.cpsc.gov/.

For information on disabilities and disability-related issues for families, you can call the National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (NICHCY) at 1-800-695-0285 or visit their Web site at www.nichcy.org/.

For information about programs that teach adults how to read, you can call America's Literacy Directory at 1-800-228-8813 or visit their Web site at: www.literacydirectory.org/.

Coming Next Month

Home Hazards

Games for Learning

Solid Foods

Take Time for Yourself

. . . and much more!

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On request, this publication is available in alternate formats, such as Braille, large print, audiotape or computer diskette. For more information, please contact the Department's Alternate Format Center (202) 260-9895 or (202) 205-8113.

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